



Congressman Donald Payne

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Payne Highlights the Plight of African Refugees

Congressman Donald M. Payne, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, yesterday convened a hearing entitled "World Refugee Day: Addressing the Needs of African Refugees". The hearing marked World Refugee Day which coincides with African Refugee Day by calling attention to the pressing issues that face refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on the African continent.

World Refugee Day was established by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) as a tribute to the indomitable spirit and courage of the world's refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, as well as to the brave people who help them rebuild their lives. It is based on African Refugee Day which was established in 1969 by the former Organization of African Unity, now known as the African Union. Currently, there are 12 million refugees worldwide. Africa accounts for 25% of the world's refugee population – approximately 3.2 million individuals. Africa also has roughly half of the world's 25 million IDPs. Despite ongoing conflicts and instability in countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Northern Uganda, Ethiopia, and their spill over effects into the region overall, Africa has moved away from war and strife towards increased stability.

During the hearing, Representative Payne questioned witnesses on such issues as how to better address the needs of refugees and IDPs, how to better integrate refugees and IDPs into larger development efforts and how to more effectively deal with the increasing number of protracted displacements through resettlement in the US and other means.

"As we honor the courage of refugees and IDPs today, it is imperative for us to come together with UNHCR, nongovernmental organizations and other donor governments to keep this issue at the forefront. It is too common a sight to see second and third generations of families living in refugee and IDP camps. Being forced to rely on others for survival is no way to live. We must pledge to help them rebuild their lives today and to commit ourselves to long-term solutions. Let us do all that we can to improve the lives of Africa's refugees and IDPs."

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